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ABSTRACT

Outside factors have changed the role of the school superintendent, leading to alterations in the personal qualities and job expectations that superintendents should have. The outside factors include increased public access to government, new public representatives, more independent political activists, less deference to authority, and a loss of confidence in institutions and leaders. The problems caused by these factors--involving decision-making, power fragmentation, and leaders' public images--have combined to politicize the superintendent's role. Superintendents must learn how to be political as their duties become less administrative and more concerned with public relations, governmental regulations, and delegation of authority. Superintendents will also have less long-term impact on their school systems, although those who learn to build coalitions may influence specific issues or situations. To fit the new role, superintendents will need political abilities, flexibility, a strong character, knowledge of formal and informal power processes, and the ability to withstand ambiguity. The job of superintendent will be less satisfying, but superintendents may expect greater job mobility and more occupational options. (RW)

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WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SUPERINTENDENTS?

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

ATLANTA, GA

FEBRUARY 14, 1981

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS SOME RECENT CHANGES IN THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT IN OUR SOCIETY AND WHAT THESE MIGHT MEAN FOR OUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL FUTURES. I HAVE TO ADMIT I APPROACH THE TOPIC WITH SOME TREPIDATION, FOR THE GENERAL QUESTION OF WHAT'S HAPPENING TO SUPERINTENDENTS IS SO VAGUE AS TO BE MEANINGLESS AND AT THE SAME TIME SO INCREDIBLY COMPLICATED THAT IT DEFIES ANALYSIS IN THE BRIEF TIME ALLOTTED TO ME. THEN AGAIN, PERHAPS IT'S APPROPRIATE THAT I SPEAK ON SUCH A TOPIC. WHEN I WAS SERVING AS DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY, ONE OF MY DETRACTORS--AND I HAD A FEW--REFERRED TO MY OFFICE AS THE "VAGUE BUREAU" BECAUSE HE CLAIMED HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD THAT CAME OUT OF IT. THIS SAME PERSON ALSO REFERRED TO MY MANAGERIAL STYLE AS "ADMINISTRATION BY ATTRITION"--WEARING PEOPLE OUT WITH MEETINGS AND

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MEMOS AND THEN PUSHING MY PROGRAMS THROUGH. I CATEGORICALLY DENY THESE CHARGES, OF COURSE--THERE'S NOT A SHRED OF TRUTH TO THEM! STILL, IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES I PROMISE NOT TO BE SO VAGUE THAT YOU CAN'T TELL WHERE I STAND ON THE ISSUES, AND IF EVERYONE HASN'T NODDED OUT BY THE TIME I'M FINISHED, I'LL ASSUME THE ATTRITION RATE IS ACCEPTABLE.

SO MUCH FOR THE PRELIMINARIES. LET ME TELL YOU AT THE OUTSET THE BASIS OF MY POINT-OF-VIEW FOR DISCUSSING THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE SUPERINTENDENCY. FOR MOST OF MY PROFESSIONAL CAREER I HAVE BEEN A PRACTITIONER: FIRST AS A TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL, THEN A SUPERINTENDENT; BECOMING STATE SUPERINTENDENT IN DELAWARE, SUPERINTENDENT IN MILWAUKEE, AND FINALLY DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AT INDIANA. RECENTLY I RECEIVED AN ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH, TO WORK WITH SOME NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CONCERNED WITH EDUCATION AND TO REFLECT ON MY EXPERIENCES PRIOR TO RETURNING TO A FULL-TIME FACULTY ROLE. THE KEY WORD HERE IS REFLECT. THERE IS PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME FOR REFLECTION AS A PRACTITIONER, GIVEN THE DEMAND FOR ACTION AND DECISIONS IN A HEATED POLITICAL ARENA. I AM REMINDED OF THE EXPERIENCE OF DAVID MATHEWS, THE ARTICULATE AND INTELLIGENT FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, WHO SERVED BRIEFLY UNDER FORD AS SECRETARY OF HEW. IF YOU

BELIEVE THE STORIES, AIDES WOULD ASK HIM FOR A DECISION, AND HE WOULD ASK THEM TO REFLECT WITH HIM ON THE CONSEQUENCES. HE WAS FRUSTRATED BY WASHINGTON, TO SAY THE LEAST. PLATO, YOU WILL REMEMBER, THOUGHT THE PHILOSOPHER-KINGS SHOULD RUN THE GOVERNMENT. NO DOUBT HE NEVER HAD TO CONTEND WITH A POLITICIZED SCHOOL BOARD AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS.

HAVING SAID THAT, I MUST TURN RIGHT AROUND AND SAY THE PRACTITIONER HAS TO REFLECT ON HIS OR HER EXPERIENCE IN SOME KIND OF CRITICAL CONTEXT: OTHERWISE ONE IS LEFT WITH ONLY DUMB RULE-FOLLOWING, PURELY THEORETICAL PIE-IN-THE-SKY THINKING, OR THE UNQUESTIONED AUTHORITY OF OTHERS. FOR ME, THIS CONTEXT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ANALYSIS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FORCES AFFECTING OUR STRUCTURES OF GOVERNANCE, OF WHICH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS A SPECIAL CASE. THROUGHOUT MY CAREER I HAVE TRIED TO STAY ON TOP OF WHAT'S HAPPENING TO LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE GENERALLY SO I COULD HAVE SOME YARDSTICK TO EXPLAIN AND--DARE I SAY IT--RATIONALIZE WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME. THEREFORE, IN DISCUSSING THE SUPERINTENDENCY TODAY, I WANT TO SET THE STAGE BY BRIEFLY LISTING THE OUTSIDE FACTORS THAT OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES HAVE AGGRAVATED GOVERNANCE IN ALL AREAS OF SOCIETY AND COMPLICATED THE LIVES OF THOSE OF US IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. THEN I WILL TURN MY ATTENTION TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

ITSELF, MAKE A FEW OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE QUALITIES FOR SUCCESS, AND CONCLUDE WITH A PERSONAL NOTE ON JOB SATISFACTION.

THE FIRST OF THE FACTORS AGGRAVATING THE EXERCISE OF LEADERSHIP IN THIS COUNTRY IS ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DECISIONS AND INDEPENDENT REVIEW. THIS SOUNDS PRETTY DULL, BUT IT'S CENTRAL TO THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THOSE IN POWER. OUTSIDE SKEPTICISM VOICED BY CITIZEN GROUPS, COMPETING INTEREST LOBBIES, AND A PERVASIVE MEDIA EMPIRE COMPLICATE DECISION-MAKING AND SLOW IT DOWN. A FEW YEARS AGO THE CHICAGO SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE TEACHERS' UNION COULDN'T REACH AN AGREEMENT IN SOMETHING LIKE 28 DAYS OF PUBLIC BARGAINING BEFORE TELEVISION AND OPEN DOORS; FINALLY THEY SETTLED THEIR DIFFERENCES IN TWO DAYS OF PRIVATE NEGOTIATION. I'M SURE YOU ALL HAVE YOUR OWN STORIES, THE END RESULT OF WHICH IS THE COST OF ACCESSIBILITY AND REVIEW IN BOTH ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS.

THE SECOND FACTOR IS EQUALITY OF REPRESENTATION. AFTER THE SUPREME COURT'S REAPPORTIONMENT DECISIONS OF THE EARLY 1960'S THE POLITICAL MACHINES WHICH CONTROLLED MANY CITIES AND STATES WERE UNABLE TO DELIVER SAFE SEATS AND LOYAL SERVANTS TO FILL THEM. ONCE A NEW GENERATION OF MORE INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES BEGAN TO FILL SEATS IN CONGRESS, SCHOOL BOARDS AND OTHER

PUBLIC AGENCIES, REFORM INEVITABLY FOLLOWED. IT MADE LITTLE SENSE TO TAKE ORDERS FROM PARTY OR BOSS LEADERSHIP WHEN A PERSON WAS ELECTED BY COALITIONS OF VOTERS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS. ONCE AGAIN I POINT TO CHICAGO AS AN EXAMPLE. UNDER THE PARTY BOSS SYSTEM OF MAYOR DALEY, THE CITY AND SCHOOL SYSTEM FUNCTIONED EFFECTIVELY, IF NOT DEMOCRATICALLY. TODAY THE SCENE IS DRAMATICALLY CHANGED.

ANOTHER FACTOR AFFECTING LEADERSHIP IS THE RISE OF INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION. THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, BEYOND ALL ITS OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS, TAUGHT PEOPLE OF EVERY PERSUASION THAT POLITICAL POWER COULD BE ORGANIZED OUTSIDE THE ORTHODOX CHANNELS OF PARTIES, CORPORATIONS, LABOR UNIONS AND ECONOMIC INTEREST GROUPS. FROM ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUPS TO THE PRO-LIFERS, FROM ANTI-NUKES TO THE MORAL MAJORITY TO PROPOSITION THIRTEEN, CITIZENS ARE SEEKING SOME LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS IN POLITICS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES THEY CARE ENOUGH ABOUT TO SUPPORT. TRADITIONAL MEANS OF CHANNELING ACTION ARE SUBSEQUENTLY FRAGMENTED, WITH NO FIRM HAND OR CLEAR VOICE EMERGING. EVEN THE CURRENT WAVE OF CONSERVATISM SWEEPING THE COUNTRY, I WOULD SUBMIT, IS NO MORE THAN A COLLECTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS GATHERED UNDER A POLITICAL BUZZ WORD CONNOTING ANYTHING THAT'S ANTI-GOVERNMENT. ALREADY

THESE ARE COMING UNRAVELED IN THE SCRAMBLE FOR INFLUENCE THAT INVARIABLY TAKES PLACE WHEN ONE ADMINISTRATION REPLACES ANOTHER. THE SAME FRAGMENTATION OF POWER IS EVIDENT ON SCHOOL BOARDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, WHERE INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS OFTEN REPRESENT AN ISSUE GROUP AS WELL AS THEIR CONSTITUENCY. THIS POLITICIZES THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT FURTHER.

TIED TO INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION IS THE LOSS OF DEFERENCE. THE LAST TWO DECADES HAVE BEEN ROUGH ON PUBLIC TRUST, AS EVERYONE KNOWS. THE SCANDALS AND REVELATIONS HAVE UNLEASHED A VICIOUS PARADOX AS FAR AS LEADERSHIP IS CONCERNED. THE PRESS--WHICH PURPORTEDLY REPRESENTS THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC--DEMANDS AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR LEADERS AND THEIR BEHAVIOR. YET THE MORE WE KNOW ABOUT THEM, THE LESS WE STAND IN AWE AND TRUST. PROBLEMS OF LEADERSHIP BECOME PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC IMAGE. SUPERINTENDENTS AND OTHER LEADERS NOW SPEND MORE TIME ON PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE MEDIA THAN THEY DO ON OTHER REQUIREMENTS OF THEIR WORK.

FINALLY, THE LOSS OF DEFERENCE AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF TRADITIONAL MODES OF GOVERNANCE HAVE CONTRIBUTED WITH A HOST OF OTHER FACTORS TO PRODUCE A GENERAL CRISIS OF CREDIBILITY AND A LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERSHIP. ONE CAN PRESS THIS ANALYSIS TOO FAR, I THINK, RESULTING IN A

FASHIONABLE NEGATIVISM, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT MANY ARE CYNICAL AND SUSPICIOUS OF ALL MODES OF GOVERNANCE. LOSS OF CREDIBILITY, WHETHER REAL OR IMAGINED, INVITES DOUBT, SCRUTINY AND CHALLENGE, ALL OF WHICH THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IS FACING. EDUCATIONAL HISTORIANS HAVE NOTED THAT THE CREDIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL DECLINED AS IT LOST ITS TRADITIONAL MISSION AND WAS PRESSURED TO TAKE ON OTHER MISSIONS. INASMUCH AS CULTURAL PLURALISM WAS URGED AS VALUABLE IN ITSELF BY THOSE SEEKING DEMOCRATIC REFORM, NO TRANSCULTURAL VALUES OR CURRICULUM COULD BE INVOKED AS A UNIFYING PRINCIPLE. THUS WE NOW TALK ABOUT "PUBLICS," EACH WITH ITS OWN VIEWS AND DEMANDS, RATHER THAN ONE COHESIVE PUBLIC. THIS HAS LED SOME OBSERVERS TO CONCLUDE THAT OUR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ARE BASICALLY UNGOVERNABLE.

I HAVE TICKED OFF THESE FACTORS AFFECTING GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP RATHER QUICKLY TO SET THE CONTEXT FOR WHAT I WANT TO SAY ABOUT THE SUPER-INTENDENCY. IF I HAD TO SUMMARIZE THEM SIMPLY, I'D TURN TO THE THOUGHTS OF WILLIAM GRIEDER, DISTINGUISHED COLUMNIST WITH THE WASHINGTON POST WHO SAYS WE ARE EXPERIENCING A CRISIS OF AUTHORITY. "POWER IS ONE THING--THE ABILITY TO COMPEL SOMEONE ELSE TO DO SOMETHING--BUT AUTHORITY IS SOMETHING

ELSE. AUTHORITY BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE, AND WHEN IT IS TAKEN AWAY A POWERFUL PRESIDENT (I WOULD ADD OR SUPERINTENDENT) CAN LOOK WEAK AND RIDICULOUS." WE THEN BLAME THE INDIVIDUAL FOR FAILING TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY OR EXERCISE POWER, BUT THE REAL CAUSE IS MUCH DEEPER.

TO QUOTE GRILDER, "WE ARE, IF YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, ASTRIDE AN HISTORICAL ERA IN WHICH THE TRADITIONAL MODES OF AUTHORITY--THE CHURCH, THE SCHOOL, THE FAMILY, THE CORPORATION--ARE UNIVERSALLY WEAKENED. THE REASONS FOR THIS ARE DIVERSE AND COMPLICATED, BUT BASICALLY IT BOILS DOWN TO A PROFOUND REDEFINITION OF OUR IMAGINATIVE SELVES." WE EXPERIENCE LIFE DIFFERENTLY THAN WE USED TO IN A SIMPLER SOCIETY; THE SENSORY DIMENSIONS OF TIME AND SPACE HAVE CHANGED. THIS SOUNDS PRETTY COSMIC, BUT CONSIDER THE FACTS: OUR MINDS ARE DELUGED WITH A SURFEIT OF INFORMATION, IMAGES, SOUNDS, AND STRANGE AND COMPETING VOICES. WHEN EVERYTHING IS UP IN THE AIR AND TRANSITORY, NOTHING IS PERMANENT. PARADOXICALLY, THE SPACE BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS GROWS GREATER AS THEY COME CLOSER IN PROXIMITY. WE RUN TO THE COMFORT OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY FOR SOLACE AND FIND, ALAS, THAT IT IS EXPERIENCING THE SAME, DIZZY-ING RATE OF CHANGE AS WE ARE. SOMEONE HAS TO BE RESPONSIBLE, WE TELL OURSELVES-- IT MUST BE THE ECONOMY, THE COMMUNISTS, THE LIBERALS, THE CONSERVATIVES, OR

THE JAPANESE AUTOMAKERS. IN THE RUSH TO PLACE BLAME FOR THE DEMISE OF THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WE FAIL TO SEE WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF A PROFOUND CULTURAL REVOLUTION THAT WILL LEAD US EVENTUALLY TO, AND I QUOTE GRIEDER AGAIN, "NEW SYMBOLS, NEW LANGUAGE, AND EVEN A RENEGOTIATION OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT IN WHICH AUTHORITY CAN ONCE AGAIN BE CONVINCING."

IN THE MEANTIME, HOWEVER, WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT? FOR ONE THING, SOME OF THEM ARE MOVING AROUND A LOT: A FEW WEEKS AGO SAM HUSK OF THE COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS TOLD ME THAT OUT OF THE 28 LARGEST CITY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCIES, 16 HAVE BEEN FILLED SINCE 1978. THAT'S NOT EXACTLY AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR JOB SECURITY. AT THE SAME TIME, I READ OF STUDIES POINTING TO LESS TURNOVER THAN IN THE PAST, OR OF SUPERINTENDENTS WHO ARE RETIRING AFTER 20 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE SAME DISTRICT. THEIR BOARDS THANK THEM, THE COMMUNITY THANKS THEM, AND THE MEDIA NOTES THE PROGRESS THE SCHOOLS HAVE MADE UNDER THEIR LEADERSHIP. INDEED, A RECENT ARTICLE IN THE SEPTEMBER 1980 ISSUE OF THE PHI DELTA KAPPAN NOTES THAT SUCCESSFUL SUPERINTENDENTS DO IN FACT EXIST--IN OHIO ANYWAY--AND CAN EVEN BE DESCRIBED: WHITE MALE, MIDDLE-AGED, REPUBLICAN, DOCTORATE IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, HOUSE IN THE DISTRICT, NO UNLISTED TELEPHONE NUMBER, ACTIVE IN CHURCH AND SERVICE CLUBS, NO NERVOUS

MANNERISMS. THEN THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH THIS KICKER: "IT IS GENERALLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE EXPERTS THAT THE SUCCESS OF A CHIEF EXECUTIVE IS INFLUENCED MOST HEAVILY BY THE QUALITY OF HIS BOARD. FORTUNATELY, FOR THE . . . ADMINISTRATORS WE STUDIED, ALL ENJOYED GOOD BOARDS."

I MENTION THESE NOTES IN PASSING TO SUGGEST THAT A PORTRAIT OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY IS A MIXED BAG, DEPENDING ON PERSONAL TRAITS, LOCATION, THE QUALITY OF THE BOARD, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, LEGAL DIRECTIVES, AND OTHER FACTORS. NEVERTHELESS, A COHESIVE PICTURE EMERGES WHEN THE ROLE IS PLACED IN THE GREATER SOCIAL CONTEXT I PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED, AND THIS IS WHAT WE OUGHT TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT AS WE PUT OUR CAREERS IN SOME KIND OF CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE.

FIRST, THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY POLITICAL FOR THE VERY REASONS I MENTIONED EARLIER. THIS IS A REACTIVE PHENOMENON: THE SUPERINTENDENT SEES THAT IF HE IS TO SURVIVE AND GET ALONG WITH A POLITICIZED SCHOOL BOARD, HE IS GOING TO HAVE TO BECOME POLITICAL, TOO. SCHOOL BOARDS EVERYWHERE ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE INVOLVED IN MATTERS THAT ARE ADMINISTRATIVE AND NOT POLICY-RELATED; SO, TOO, ARE THE COURTS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS. THIS PUTS THE SUPERINTENDENT IN A DOUBLE-BIND. HE CAN

EITHER GIVE IN TO POLITICAL DEMANDS AND THEREBY POLITICIZE THE SYSTEM FURTHER--
 JUST WHAT EVERYONE SAYS HE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO DO--OR HE CAN REFUSE TO PLAY
 POLITICAL HARDBALL AND GET EATEN ALIVE, AS HAS HAPPENED IN CASES TOO NUMEROUS
 TO MENTION. IT REMINDS ME OF THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN WHO LIVED ON THE BORDER
 BETWEEN THE NORTH AND SOUTH DURING THE CIVIL WAR AND COULDN'T DECIDE ON WHICH
 SIDE TO FIGHT. FINALLY HE PUT ON A GREY SHIRT AND BLUE PANTS, AND ENDED UP
 GETTING SHOT IN BOTH.

THE SUPERINTENDENT IS NOT QUITE IN THE SAME SITUATION AS THE YOUNG MAN,
 HOWEVER. WE'VE ALL HEARD THAT PUBLIC EDUCATION IS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOVE
 POLITICS; WE ALL KNOW THAT OUR ROLE AS PROFESSIONALS IS TO MANAGE A SCHOOL
 SYSTEM ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA OF GOOD EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE--BEGGING THE
 QUESTION THAT WE KNOW WHAT THESE CRITERIA ARE. THEREFORE, OUR PROBLEM ISN'T
 KNOWING WHICH SIDE TO FIGHT FOR--IT'S TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO AVOID
 GETTING SHOT OUT OF THE SADDLE IN THE PROCESS. VINCENT REED, WHO RECENTLY
 RESIGNED AS SUPERINTENDENT IN WASHINGTON, D.C., TOLD A REPORTER FROM THE
WASHINGTON POST THAT--AND I QUOTE--"IF I WERE A GOOD POLITICIAN, I WOULD
 NOT BE IN THE FIX I'M IN NOW." THIS IS THE SAME MAN MANY PEOPLE REFERRED
 TO AS "THE ONE GOOD THING ABOUT THE D.C. SCHOOL SYSTEM." UNDER HIS

LEADERSHIP TEST SCORES WENT UP, AND IMPROVEMENTS WERE SEEN IN OTHER AREAS. HE RESIGNED BECAUSE HE COULDN'T PUT UP ANYMORE WITH BOARD MEMBERS GETTING THEIR FINGERS IN THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION OF THE SCHOOLS. BELIEVE IT OR NOT, ONE BOARD MEMBER CAME TO HIM WITH A REQUEST--NO, A COMMAND--THAT HIS PICTURE BE HUNG IN ALL THE SCHOOLS IN HIS WARD. AFTER A FEW YEARS OF THIS SORT OF THING, ONE GETS A LITTLE TIRED. PERHAPS THAT'S WHY THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT IN CHICAGO SIGNED FOR A SALARY OVER \$100,000. IT MIGHT BE A BARGAIN AT THAT.

OBVIOUSLY THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO PLAY POLITICS. IF THE SUPERINTENDENT DOESN'T HAVE A POWER BASE ON THE BOARD, HE CAN CULTIVATE INFLUENTIAL GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY. THE POINT IS, ONE HAS TO CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO PLAY THIS SORT OF GAME AND LEARN THE RULES ACCORDINGLY. IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE DO A VERY GOOD JOB OF TEACHING IN OUR SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION. AS BEN FRANKLIN SAID IN POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC, "EXPERIENCE KEEPS A HARD SCHOOL, BUT A FOOL WILL LEARN IN NO OTHER." THE REALITIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY TODAY DICTATE THAT PERSONS ENTERING THE FIELD BE AWARE THAT THE DEMANDS OF THE JOB ARE BECOMING LESS MANAGERIAL AND MORE POLITICAL IN NATURE. WE MAY SOON FIND THAT SUPERINTENDENTS WON'T COME FROM THE RANKS OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS AT ALL, BUT

FROM BUSINESS, LAW AND OTHER FIELDS. THE FUTURE SHOULD BE INTERESTING FOR CREDENTIALING AND ACCREDITATION, TO SAY THE LEAST.

IF THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IS MORE POLITICAL, THEN BY DEFINITION IT IS MORE PUBLIC. THIS LEADS TO MY SECOND POINT: THE DUTIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT ARE SHIFTING FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE NOW SPENDS AS MUCH TIME OUTSIDE THE OFFICE WORKING WITH VARIOUS PUBLICS AS HE DOES INSIDE WORKING WITH THE SYSTEM. MEDIA RELATIONS BECOME PARAMOUNT; BUILDING A GOOD "IMAGE" FOR THE SYSTEM AND ITS PROGRAMS IS A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL POLITICAL ACTION. THE SAME SHIFT CAN BE SEEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS EVERYWHERE, WHETHER ONE IS TALKING ABOUT THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY, A CORPORATION, OR A NON-PROFIT GROUP. LEADERS COMPLAIN THAT THEY ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND TO THE MANAGERIAL PROBLEMS BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO SPEND TOO MUCH TIME TALKING TO PARENTS, LEGISLATORS, BUSINESSMEN, AND SPECIAL ISSUE GROUPS. THE SUPERINTENDENT BECOMES A "FRONT MAN" FOR THE SYSTEM--HE TAKES THE PUBLIC SHOTS AND FENDS OFF CRITICISM WHILE HIS STAFF RUNS THE SCHOOLS. HE CAN TRY TO DO BOTH, OF COURSE, BUT FOR MOST PEOPLE THE JUGGLING ACT IS HARROWING. ONE AREA QUICKLY SLIDES TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE OTHER, AND

EFFECTIVENESS IS DIMINISHED ACCORDINGLY. HOW MUCH TIME A SUPERINTENDENT WILL SPEND ON PUBLIC RELATIONS VARIES ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF THE DISTRICT, THE POLITICAL CLIMATE, AND PAST HISTORY, BUT IN GENERAL IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT THESE KINDS OF FUNCTIONS ARE MORE THE NORM THAN THE EXCEPTION. IF THE SUPERINTENDENT LACKS THE NECESSARY PUBLIC RELATIONS SKILLS, HE WON'T BE SUCCESSFUL.

TWO RELATED POINTS CAN BE MADE HERE. FIRST, WHENEVER THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE IS OUTSIDE MENDING POLITICAL FENCES, SOMEONE ELSE HAS TO BE HANDLING OPERATIONS. THIS MIGHT APPEAR TO BE A SIMPLE MATTER OF DELEGATING AUTHORITY AND ISSUING A FEW DIRECTIVES, BUT IT IS FAR MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT. AS STUDENTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, WE HAVE PAID LITTLE ATTENTION TO WHAT HAPPENS INTERNALLY WHEN PUBLIC FUNCTIONS AND IMAGE-BUILDING INCREASE. WE MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO FIND A SHIFT OF POWER AND AUTHORITY AWAY FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT TO INSIDE COALITIONS OF ADMINISTRATORS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN ENTRENCHED IN THE SYSTEM FOR YEARS. THE SAME PHENOMENON CAN BE SEEN IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHOSE ENTRENCHED BUREAUCRACY HAS SEEN PRESIDENTS COME AND GO, EACH ONE OF THEM TRYING TO GET A HANDLE ON THE SYSTEM AND EACH

ONE OF THEM FAILING. DIRECTIVES MAY WELL BE ISSUED FROM THE TOP, BUT THEY DON'T ALWAYS FILTER THROUGH THE SYSTEM AS INTENDED. IN THIS CASE THE SUPERINTENDENT, IF HE IS NOT CAREFUL, CAN LITERALLY BE FLOATING BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE SYSTEM WITHOUT EVER TOUCHING DOWN IN EITHER. TO BE EFFECTIVE, HE MUST "BELONG" SOMEWHERE AND COMMAND A MEASURE OF AUTHORITY, EVEN IF IT'S ONLY SHORT-TERM.

THE SECOND POINT IS THAT THE PUBLIC RELATION DUTIES ARE ONLY PART OF THE SUPERINTENDENT'S WORRIES. ANOTHER PART CONSISTS OF GOVERNMENT AND STATE REGULATIONS, DIRECTIVES AND PAPERWORK, MOST OF WHICH HAVE LITTLE TO DO WITH EDUCATION. I TELL YOU NOTHING NEW WHEN I SAY THAT THE TIME ONE SPENDS ON THIS SORT OF THING IS ENORMOUS AND DETRACTS FROM OTHER TASKS. IT REPRESENTS ONE MORE DRAIN ON THE SUPERINTENDENT AND HIS STAFF. IN THE FUTURE WE WILL SEE MORE, NOT LESS, OF THIS, REGARDLESS OF ELECTION-YEAR PROMISES. THE DRIFT TOWARD INCREASING REGULATION AND LEGISLATION OF EDUCATION IS, IT SEEMS TO ME, INEVITABLE.

MY THIRD GENERAL POINT ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENCY IS THAT THE TRADITIONAL ROLE IS DECLINING IN IMPORTANCE. THIS MIGHT SOUND ALARMING TO MANY OF YOU,

SO LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT I MEAN. IN THE PAST IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR AN INDIVIDUAL SUPERINTENDENT TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON A SCHOOL DISTRICT. THERE WAS LESS PUBLIC AND INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS, LESS CRY FOR JUSTICE AND INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS, A MORE STABLE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE CITIES, MORE AUTHORITY IN INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE SCHOOL, AND MORE TRUST IN PUBLIC OFFICIALS TRAINED FOR SPECIFIC JOBS. THE SUPERINTENDENT TRADITIONALLY ENTERED THE DISTRICT WITH A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT HIS ROLE WAS AND WHAT HE MIGHT EXPECT IN CARRYING OUT ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS. THE JOB WASN'T ALWAYS EASY, BUT HIS ROLE AS A PROFESSIONAL WAS GENERALLY ACCEPTED AND, CONSEQUENTLY, MORE SECURE.

CONDITIONS CHANGE, HOWEVER, AND TODAY ALL PUBLIC OFFICIALS ARE CALLED INTO QUESTION. THE ABILITY OF ANY ONE INDIVIDUAL TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE DIMINISHES AS THE DEMANDS OF THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WIDER POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ARENA OVERLOAD A PARTICULAR SYSTEM, WHETHER IT'S THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR THE SCHOOL. SYSTEM NEEDS OVERSHADOW INDIVIDUAL NEEDS; THE WHOLE BECOMES GREATER THAN ANY COMBINATION OF ITS PARTS AND ASSUMES A LIFE OF ITS OWN APART FROM STEERING DIRECTIVES ISSUED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVES. THIS IS NOT TO SAY NOTHING

GETS DONE, BUT IT DOES SUGGEST THE DIMINISHING ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL LEADERSHIP. THAT'S WHY IN THE FUTURE WE CAN EXPECT SUPERINTENDENTS TO EXERCISE LESS INFLUENCE THAN THEY DID IN THE PAST.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS COIN IS THAT WHILE THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WILL GENERALLY DIMINISH, THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT WHO CAN BUILD AND UTILIZE ROLLING COALITIONS WILL INCREASE. THIS IS A POLITICAL STRATEGY CONSISTENT WITH THE NEW REALITIES: THE COALITIONS WILL COME TOGETHER AROUND SPECIFIC ISSUES, PRESS FOR ACTION, AND THEN DISBAND, TO BE REPLACED BY OTHER COALITIONS AND OTHER ISSUES. THE POWER OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IN THIS FUNCTION WILL BE TRANSITORY RATHER THAN PERMANENT. HE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, BUT FOR SHORTER TIME PERIODS AND OVER MORE THAN ONE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND PROFESSIONAL POSITION. ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING THIS IS THAT THERE WILL BE LEADERS FOR CERTAIN SEASONS BUT NOT ONE FOR ALL SEASONS. AS COALITIONS AND ISSUES CHANGE, SO WILL THE SUPERINTENDENT. LOYALTY WILL BE TO THE ROLE AND THE PROFESSION RATHER THAN TO THE DISTRICT AND ANY ONE PARTICULAR ISSUE. THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT CHIEF EXECUTIVES WILL BE SHALLOW OPPORTUNISTS, FLITTING FROM DISTRICT TO DISTRICT WITHOUT EVER MAKING A COMMITMENT TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN THEIR OWN AGGRANDIZEMENT; NOR DOES IT MEAN THERE WON'T BE SUPERINTENDENTS WHO FIND A

DISTRICT TO THEIR LIKING AND MAKE A LONG STAY OUT OF IT. IT DOES MEAN THAT MOBILITY WILL INCREASE, TENURE IN ANY ONE POSITION WILL CONTINUE TO DECREASE, SUCCESS WILL MOST LIKELY BE FOR THE SHORT- RATHER THAN THE LONG-TERM, AND MARKETABLE SKILLS IN BUILDING COALITIONS WILL SUPERCEDE THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PERSON AS "FITTING IN" WITH A PARTICULAR TYPE OF COMMUNITY. EXCEPTIONS WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND, BUT GENERALLY SPEAKING THESE TRENDS SHOULD HOLD INTO THE FUTURE.

GIVEN WHAT I'VE SAID SO FAR ABOUT THE MODERN SUPERINTENDENCY, WHAT MIGHT AN INDIVIDUAL EXPECT IN THE WAY OF SUCCESS? FIRST, I'D SAY THAT HE SHOULD EXPECT TO FIGHT A NUMBER OF BATTLES AT ONE TIME, LOSING AT LEAST SOME OF THEM. IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO NEGOTIATE, COMPROMISE, BALANCE INTERESTS, ACCEPT DEFEAT GRACEFULLY, UNDERSTAND THE LEGITIMACY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS, THIS ISN'T THE JOB FOR YOU. THE POSITION DEMANDS A GREAT DEAL OF FLEXIBILITY, AND EACH PERSON HAS TO DECIDE FOR HIMSELF WHERE THE BREAKING POINT IS. IT IS EASY TO BECOME BITTER AFTER YEARS OF HAVING A POLITICIZED SCHOOL BOARD ASSASSINATE ONE'S PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND CHARACTER, OFTEN DRAGGING THE BATTLE DOWN TO THE GUTTER OF PERSONAL SLURS AND INNUENDOS.

IT REQUIRES A STRONG PERSONALITY TO SUCCEED, SOMEONE WHO IS COMFORTABLE WITH HIMSELF, RECOGNIZES THAT CONFLICT IS INEVITABLE, AND ABLE TO SEE HARSH CRITICISM IN THE LARGER CONTEXT. THERE IS NO TRAINING FOR THIS SORT OF THING--IT COMES WITH THE TERRITORY, WITH AGE AND EXPERIENCE. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THERE ARE SACRIFICES I WON'T MAKE FOR ANY POSITION--INTEGRITY AND HONOR, FOR INSTANCE--AND I'M SURE THE SAME IS TRUE FOR MANY OF YOU WHO HAVE HAD TO BITE THE BULLET AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER AND STAND UP FOR WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE RIGHT. ACCEPTING CRITICISM IS ONE THING, BUT SELF-WORTH IS ANOTHER. THESE ARE THE PRIVATE, SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS, FACED AFTER THE BOARDS AND TV CAMERAS HAVE GONE HOME, ASKING YOURSELF WHETHER IT'S ALL WORTH IT. I COULDN'T BEGIN TO ADVISE SOMEONE ELSE IN THIS DIMENSION--I CAN ONLY RELATE TO NEWCOMERS HOW IT IS IN THE TRENCHES AND TELL THEM THAT IF THEY DON'T HAVE THE STOMACH FOR IT, THEY HAD BETTER STAY OUT.

ALONG WITH POSSESSING FLEXIBILITY AND A STRONG CHARACTER, THE SUCCESSFUL SUPERINTENDENT IS SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHEN AND HOW TO MOVE IN THE SYSTEM. THIS IS CALLED "READING" THE SYSTEM--LEARNING THE INFORMAL AS WELL AS THE FORMAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK, THE STYLES AND PERSONALITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL PLAYERS, THE BOUNDARIES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN THE COMMUNITY, THE POCKETS OF POWER,

AND ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BEHAVIOR. THE SUCCESSFUL SUPERINTENDENT IS AN ASTUTE JUDGE OF OTHER PEOPLE AND HAS HIS FINGER ON THE PULSE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE COMMUNITY. THERE'S NOTHING PARTICULARLY NOVEL IN THIS, EXCEPT THAT TODAY THE PARAMETERS IN WHICH JUDGMENTS ARE MADE ARE MORE UNSTABLE THAN THEY FORMERLY WERE, MAKING THE ACT OF "READING" MORE IMPORTANT AND CERTAINLY MORE PRECARIOUS. IN THIS CONNECTION, A SENSE OF TIMING AND A FLUID, ADAPTABLE STYLE COMPATIBLE WITH THE OTHER ACTORS ARE KEY INGREDIENTS.

THIS SAME UNSTABLE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT ALSO DEMANDS THE ABILITY TO DEAL WITH AMBIGUITY. ISSUES ARE SELDOM PAINTED IN BLACK AND WHITE; SUPPORTERS ON ONE SIDE OF THE TABLE CAN EASILY BECOME ADVERSARIES UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES. THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE WHO ADHERES TO PLANS AND TIMETABLES MAY WAKE UP ONE MORNING TO FIND HIMSELF THE VICTIM OF HIS OWN BEST DESIGNS AND STRATEGIES UNLESS HE DEVELOPS A LARGE TOLERANCE FOR LOOSE ENDS, VAGUE POLICY AND GREY AREAS IN BETWEEN WINNING AND LOSING. IT'S NOT ALWAYS CLEAR WHERE ONE STANDS: IF YOU'RE NOT RISING WITH THE TIDE OR SINKING FAST, MOST LIKELY YOU'RE TREADING WATER WITH EVERYBODY ELSE. I'VE KNOWN SUPERINTENDENTS WHO WERE EXTREMELY BRIGHT AND CAPABLE BUT WHO WERE UNABLE TO COME TO TERMS

WITH AMBIGUITY. THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE MAKING PROGRESS IN ONE AREA, ONLY TO FIND IT UNDERMINED BY SETBACKS SOMEWHERE ELSE. THEY BECAME FRUSTRATED BY THE CHAOTIC POLITICAL SCENE, THOUGH THEY UNDERSTOOD IT WELL ENOUGH ON AN INTELLECTUAL LEVEL. THEY SOUGHT A MORE POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM THE SYSTEM THAN PERSONAL SURVIVAL, WHEN SURVIVAL ITSELF WAS ALL THEY COULD HAVE HOPED FOR UNDER DURESS AND EXTREMELY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES. THEY FAILED TO PUT THE AMBIGUITIES OF THE JOB IN A LARGER CONTEXT, WHERE PERSONAL SUCCESS CONSISTS OF MORE THAN A TALLY SHEET OF BATTLES WON OR LOST.

THE DEGREE OF AMBIGUITY MAY BE LESS FOR SUPERINTENDENTS IN MORE STABLE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS, BUT ULTIMATELY EVERYONE WILL FEEL THE PRESSURE. I SAY THIS BECAUSE OF THE CONTINUING DRIFT TOWARD SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION, THE DECLINE OF THE LOCAL DISTRICT AND THE RISE OF THE STATE SYSTEM, THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL LEGISLATION RELATING TO SPECIAL GROUPS, SUCH AS MINORITIES AND THE HANDICAPPED; THE DECLINE OF THE TRADITIONAL SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION, AND THE OMINOUS QUESTION OF HOW PUBLIC EDUCATION IS TO BE FINANCED. THE QUESTION OF WHO'S GOING TO PAY FOR THE SCHOOLS, IT SEEMS TO ME, WILL HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT ON STRUCTURES OF GOVERNANCE, AND IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT WILL ULTIMATELY BE AFFECTED. ONE THING,

HOWEVER, REMAINS CERTAIN: THE ROLE IS GOING TO CHANGE, AND NOT NECESSARILY IN WAYS TO EVERYONE'S LIKING. THOSE OF US WHO CAN'T ACCEPT CHANGE AND YEARN FOR THE DAYS OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY ARE IN FOR A RUDE AWAKENING.

IN THE END IT COMES DOWN TO THE QUESTION OF JOB SATISFACTION. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A CAREER AS A SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR: MONEY? PRESTIGE? CHALLENGE? SECURITY? POWER? IF NECESSARY, ARE YOU WILLING TO COMPROMISE YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS? IF NOT, WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO COMPROMISE? ARE YOU IRREVOCABLY COMMITTED TO THE PROFESSION, OR WOULD YOU CONSIDER A CAREER CHANGE AT A CERTAIN POINT? HOW FAR DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK YOU CAN GO, AND AT WHAT PRICE? FINALLY, WHAT DOES YOUR JOB HAVE TO DO WITH YOUR CONCEPT OF SELF-WORTH?

IT'S EASY TO ASK THESE QUESTIONS, BUT NOT TO ANSWER THEM. IRONICALLY, DURING A TIME WHEN THE SUPERINTENDENCY IS UNDER SIEGE I READ OF STUDIES SUGGESTING THAT MOST ADMINISTRATORS ARE SATISFIED WITH THEMSELVES AND THEIR CAREERS. FRANKLY, THIS BOTHERS ME. I'D BE THE LAST PERSON TO DENY SOMEONE SATISFACTION IN HIS OR HER CAREER, BUT NOT IF IT SMACKS OF SMUGNESS OR COMPLACENCY. TOO OFTEN WE TEND TO BE SATISFIED WITH OUR OWN PERFORMANCE AND PASS OFF OUR TROUBLES TO OUTSIDE FACTORS, SUCH AS STAFF, BOARDS, THE ECONOMY,

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND SO ON. WE ENTRENCH OURSELVES IN THE SYSTEM, PAY LIP SERVICE TO EDUCATIONAL IDEALS, AND FOLLOW THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE IN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT. WE FAIL TO MAINTAIN A SHARP ENOUGH EDGE, TO BE JUST ENOUGH DISSATISFIED TO CONTINUE TO PROBE AND QUESTION BOTH THE SYSTEM AND OURSELVES, AND YET NOT SO UNHAPPY THAT WE END UP AS DISILLUSIONED CYNICS AND NAY-SAYERS. SATISFACTION, IT SEEMS TO ME, OUGHT TO BE TEMPORARY RATHER THAN PERMANENT. LIKE FAITH AND LOVE, IT HAS TO BE WON ANEW IN STRUGGLE AND REAFFIRMED IN DEEDS.

THIS IS NOT MEANT TO SOUND MORALISTIC, BUT ONLY PROPERLY REALISTIC. ONE IS NOT SUCCESSFUL IN THIS BUSINESS WITHOUT A SLIGHTLY JADED EYE AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF ALL HUMAN ENDEAVOR. THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION OF OPTIONS. IF YOU CHOOSE TO STAY IN EDUCATION--AND THERE'S CERTAINLY NOTHING WRONG WITH THAT--YOUR OPTIONS ARE LIMITED. AFTER YOU ACHIEVE THE SUPERINTENDENCY YOU HAVE TO FACE THE QUESTION OF POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER GROWTH. CONSEQUENTLY, YOU MAY CHOOSE TO SEE THAT POSITION NOT AS A LIFETIME CAREER BUT AS ONE STEP IN A SERIES OF CAREERS. YOU MAY MOVE AROUND MORE OFTEN THAN YOU DID IN THE PAST, AND YOU MAY VIEW SUCCESS IN SHORTER TIME-FRAMES RELATED TO SPECIFIC GOALS RATHER THAN OVER THE LONG

HAUL. ULTIMATELY, YOU MAY SEEK TO GET OUT OF EDUCATION ALTOGETHER.

TEACHERS ARE DOING IT--CAN THE SUPERINTENDENTS BE FAR BEHIND?

JOB SATISFACTION AND OPTIONS IN CAREERS WILL PLAY IMPORTANT ROLES IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY IN THE FUTURE, PRIMARILY DUE TO CHANGED SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF PEOPLE ENTERING THE FIELD. THE "OLD BOY" NETWORK WON'T BE WHAT IT USED TO BE OR EVEN WHAT IT IS TODAY, GIVEN THE SHIFT IN POWER FROM INDIVIDUALS TO ROLLING COALITIONS AND THE PUBLIC FISH-BOWL WORLD IN WHICH WE ARE OBLIGED TO WORK. WHO KNOWS--THE SUPERINTENDENT MAY BE AN ADMINISTRATIVE RELIC 20 OR 30 YEARS HENCE, REPLACED BY CONSULTANTS, COMMITTEES, OR EVEN A COMPUTER PROGRAMMED FOR COST-EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT. I HAVE NO CRYSTAL BALL FOR THIS--I AM SURE ONLY THAT THE SCENE WILL CHANGE, AND WE'LL HAVE TO CHANGE WITH IT OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.

AND YET, HAVING SAID ALL THESE TROUBLING THINGS ABOUT THE SUPERINTENDENCY, I AM STILL OPTIMISTIC FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION. PERIODS OF RAPID SOCIAL CHANGE AND EVOLVING POLITICAL STRUCTURES INEVITABLY BRING DISLOCATION, REACTIONISM, AND ENTRENCHMENT, BUT EVENTUALLY THE NEW ORDER REPLACES THE OLD. SOME WILL REFUSE TO CALL THIS PROGRESS, JUDGING IT BY DIFFERENT STANDARDS, AND IN SOME CASES THEY MAY BE RIGHT, AS PROGRESS ALWAYS EXTRACTS ITS POUND

OF FLESH FROM SOMEWHERE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS NO ADVANTAGE IN YEARNING FOR THE PAST, WHICH IS FAR MORE IDYLIC IN OUR IMAGINATION THAN IT EVER WAS IN REALITY. AS SOREN KIERKEGAARD SAID, "PHILOSOPHERS ARE FOND OF SAYING THAT LIFE MUST BE UNDERSTOOD BACKWARDS, BUT THEY FORGET THAT IT MUST BE LIVED FORWARD." THE PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR OF TODAY OUGHT TO TAKE THIS TO HEART AS HE OR SHE PREPARES FOR AN UNSETTLING DECADE IN THE 1980'S. EDUCATION IS A VIRTUAL NECESSITY, GIVEN THE REQUIREMENTS OF MODERN SOCIETY; WHAT IS IN QUESTION IS THE FORM IT'S GOING TO TAKE AND OUR ROLE IN BRINGING IT ABOUT. THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE ENDLESS--IT'S UP TO US TO DECIDE WHAT TO MAKE OF THEM.

THANK YOU.